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which he assumes. This he would explain by supposing that the sculptors took some dimensions from one canon, and others from another, in which case there seems to be no need of assuming a canon at all, inasmuch as there is nothing to hinder a sculptor from taking measurements or proportions directly from living models, without the intervention of canons. It seems hardly probable that the Greek sculptors derived their proportions from canons, unless they regarded those canons as correct, and if a given sculptor regarded a given canon as correct, he would not spoil his work by taking some proportions from another canon. Kalkmann also seems to think that each artist had one canon to which he always adhered. This precludes all possibility of progress in any artist. It also makes it well-nigh impossible to ascribe any two extant works to the same person.

An elaborate review of Kalkmann's work (by Furtwängler) has appeared in the *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift*, 1894, pp. 1105-1109, and 1139-1144, to which those may refer who wish to read a discussion of details. Kalkmann's theory of canonical proportions forces him to assign the sculptures of Aegina to the sixth century, and those of Olympia to a time "not later than the first decade of the fifth century." He is also compelled to deny that the "Sauroktonos" is the work of Praxiteles, and to place the original of the Apollo of the Belvedere chronologically before the Hermes of Praxiteles. In several other instances works the dates of which are fixed by direct statements of ancient writers, or by the most certain stylistic evidence, are assigned to new dates solely on the evidence of mechanical measurements. It is hardly necessary to say that such results show that proportions cannot alone determine the relative historical positions of works of art. Kalkmann's work is valuable as a careful collection of accurate measurements and the product of much independent investigation. His theory, however, is disproved by the results to which it leads him.

Four plates and twelve illustrations in the text (nearly all by photographic process) add greatly to the value and beauty of the work. Plates I and II represent the Herakles in the Palazzo Altemps at Rome, plate III the boxer from Sorrento in Naples, plate IV a youthful head in the Louvre. Most of the other illustrations represent heads, though the Diomedes in Munich is represented to a point somewhat below the middle, and the Landsdown Herakles at full length.

HAROLD N. FOWLER.

AL. GAYET. *L'Art Arabe*. Bibliothèque de l'Enseignement des Beaux Arts. 8vo, pp. 316. Paris, 1893.

This volume is intended by the author to be more than a handbook of the art of Islam: it is an attempt to set forth not only the

history but especially the philosophy of this art, its innermost character, and its special æsthetic message to the world ; such an attempt, in fine, as had not yet been made. In its appreciation of the historic development of Arab art, it is not based upon larger histories, because no such histories have been written as could fill such a position. M. Gayet's book is therefore rather peculiar: it is a pioneer, and hence cannot be as elementary and simply descriptive as handbooks are expected to be. It advances at times new theories and then becomes argumentative and personal in its support of them, and is obliged to have recourse to detailed proof. For example, in the case of the polygonal system of decoration, which is for M. Gayet the keynote to the spiritual meaning of Arab art, there are geometric demonstrations so intricate and detailed as to require the closest expert attention.

Arab art is both a broad and a vague title. Let us see how the author understands it. We feel at every turn that M. Gayet knows and admires Egypt, and has not only become penetrated by its mystic charm and supersensuous fascination, but has gone so far as to regard it as the land in which Islamic art was formed and developed. His point of view is briefly this: Having in a few years conquered almost the entire Orient, the Arabs, themselves without artistic sense, yet feeling the need of a monumental expression for their new civilization, rejected the external, imitative, material Hellenic art of Byzantium and turned to the Coptic art of Egypt for principles, ideas, and forms, because the Oriental mysticism and idealism, in which the Arab participated, were most perfectly embodied in the Christian Copts of Egypt, the land of Philo, of the Gnostics and the Neo-Platonists. Immediately after the conquest the Copts became the artists of the new civilization, and continued to be during the next thousand years, developing the types that ruled the Mohammedan world.

That there were other forms of Islamic art beside the Egyptian M. Gayet grants. Moorish art, Persian art and the art of the Khalifate are the three main divisions that he recognizes ; the latter comprising several branches, among which the Egyptian predominates. The writer pushes aside both Moorish and Persian art for reasons that do not seem at all clear, and confines himself to what he calls the art of the Khalifate—in which he presumably includes Syria and Mesopotamia, with its centres at Damascus and Baghdad. Even of this last division he treats fully only the branch that was developed in Egypt, the object of his book being to prove its supremacy, very much as expressible in a proposition like the following: Mohammedan Coptic art = Arab art; Persian and Moorish art are not Coptic; therefore they are not Arabic.

At the very threshold the re-building of the sacred Kaaba of Mecca, just before Mohammed had declared his mission, was under the direction of a Copt. The first mosque was that built by Amru at Fostat, near Alexandria, and it became the type of subsequent mosques, not only in Egypt, but in the rest of the Mohammedan world, a type which was opposed to the Byzantine. The pointed arch and flat roof were its constructive characteristics, and in ground-plan it consisted of a square court with colonnades of unequal width on all sides. Although during this early period Egypt was not the centre of Mohammedan power, the Copts introduced the rules of their architecture throughout the Khalifate (A. D. 661-744). Even the later art of the Khalifs of Baghdad, the famous Harûn-al-Rashîd, and Al-Mamûn (ix cent.), was Coptic, according to M. Gayet. The author's picture of the Islamic art of the first three centuries of the Hejira is completed by an account of the formation of Arab ornament. He here discusses the question of the use of figures. Did Mohammedan art avoid the human and animal forms because these forms were proscribed on religious grounds, or was the avoidance voluntary? The writer's discussion is interesting and vital to the point of view of the book, for he believes that the Oriental artist was not forced into this path, but took it in order to deliver himself from the external and debasing thralldom of the human figure, so precious to Hellenism, and to express his spiritualism, his mystic idealism, in a rhythmic art of intertwining vines, foliage and flowers, of geometric combinations which were at first simple and tentative, but gradually developed in the following period (x-xii cent.) into a wonderful system of polygonal decoration that could respond to every mood of ecstasy and convey every form of internal sensation.

The second great stage in the development of Arab art, and the first that we can study in existing monuments, is that which flourished under the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt, beginning with the foundation of Cairo in 969. In this great artistic era architecture was changed by the partial adoption of the dome and barrel vault in place of the flat roof, and decoration by the development of the polygonal geometric style and its universal application, though floral ornamentation is not entirely abandoned. The short chapter entitled *Le tracé géométrique des polygones*, showing the geometric formulas for the making of every variety of combination of forms, is extremely interesting. This system was applied to marble decorations, mosaic work, stucco, to buildings, to large and small works of industrial art in every branch. It is certainly most characteristic and most interesting. A large part of the book is concerned with its development, its manifold forms and application to various purposes. M. Gayet,

in explaining the philosophy of its forms, insists that very precise sensations or states can be produced according to the principle at the basis of the combination of lines. He says: *Les polygones réguliers exprimeront entre tous des idées nettes, précises, immuables. Celles de ces figures dont le nombre de côtés est pair refléteront des sentiments calmes, graves, empreints d'une sérénité douce; celles dont le nombre de côtés est impair, une mélancholie vague, le trouble, l'incertitude qu'entraîne leur manque de symétrie et d'équilibre; et de la juxtaposition de ces deux formes se dégagera une impression mixte, déterminée par les proportions de leurs combinaisons. Là réside tout le principe de la sensation, obtenue au moyen des entrelacs géométriques. L'entrelacs n'est que l'entre-croisement régulier des lignes tracées dans une figure primaire, un dérivé de cette figure, une superposition de polygones s'entrecoupant dans un assemblage initial. L'expression simple donnée par la forme essentielle s'exalte. Une figure calme aura par l'entrelacs la sensation de l'infini; une figure hésitante, celle d'une tristesse profonde. L'image dérivée de l'assemblage du carré et de l'octogone éveillera l'idée de l'immutabilité éternelle, celle qui a pour base l'heptagone, celle d'un mystère vague et inquiet.*

While acceding fully to the assertion that thoroughly scientific and carefully thought-out principles determined Arab polygonal decoration of all kinds, and no atom of fantasy and chance, one may well hesitate to invest it with so much meaning and psychologic intuition. But I shall avoid criticism until the close of my summary of contents.

Under the last Fatimids and the short Ayoubite dynasty art was no longer so vigorous in Egypt. A great revival and the opening of the third and greatest period in Arab art came with the accession of the Baharite dynasty (1250-1380), when Egypt was once again the centre of Arab civilization. In architecture the great step was the generalization of the use of the dome, which, from being used exclusively over funerary chapels, came to be employed in the mosques, thus leading to a total transformation of architecture. The dome was not spherical, like the Byzantine, but ovoidal in shape, with a grouping of stalactites in the place of pendentives. All the decorative arts blossomed with unparalleled splendor; and mosaics, faïence, stained glass, wood-carving, stucco, all were utilized, mostly under the law of polygonal decoration. In a chapter on the philosophy of Arab art in the XIV century, the writer insists upon its feeling and its spiritual insight, as opposed to the imitative and realistic schools of the West. In a chapter on the role of figures in art, he speaks of the use of the human figure un-realistically, under what he calls the law of polygonal anatomy, and the use of hieratic birds and animals, often pierced with ornamental holes, to show that no imitation, but a purely decorative effect, was intended.

Under the succeeding Bordjite dynasty the architecture remains the same constructively, but it is covered with rich ornamentation in low relief even over the exterior, and all its forms receive greater slenderness and grace, this being especially shown in the development of the minaret. It is noticeable, also, that the polygonal system is largely abandoned in favor of a reversion to the earlier floral designs.

The final chapters deal with the decorative art of the entire period : with mosque furniture, glass, tapestries and stuffs, damascene work, bronzes, arms, wood-inlay, illuminations, calligraphy, *etc.* In all of these branches, with the single exception of damascene work, which is the specialty of Persia, he claims priority or supreme excellence for Egypt. The closing remarks relate to civil architecture, about which there is but little to say.

The illustrations are full and good. A sufficient historic synopsis is prefaced to each stage of the artistic development. The proportion of specific detail to general statement is in the main excellent.

It is nevertheless true that the book stands or falls according to the answer one gives to three crucial questions. This, I am sure, the author would admit. These are :

(1.) Should a handbook of "Arab" art substantially omit the Mohammedan art of every country but Egypt? Yes, says M. Gayet.

(2.) Was Arab art influenced by Byzantine art? No, says M. Gayet; it was intensely and diametrically opposed to it.

(3.) Is the polygonal system of decoration, which is the essence and soul of "Arab" art, the peculiar and exclusive appanage of Egypt? Yes, says M. Gayet; it is the art of a race, not of a religion.

These questions are fundamental because the author's answer to the first determined the scope of his book, that to the second his estimate of the historic position of Arab art, that to the third his view of its inner character and significance. With a writer of a different temperament these questions would not hold so important a place, but M. Gayet is essentially an idealist of a peculiar type, and views art from the psycho-æsthetic standpoint. Let us take up the questions in order. First, why should not the Mohammedan art of Persia or Spain be included in a handbook of Arab art? M. Gayet's answer is that neither Persian nor Moorish art are "Arab," because they are determined by pre-existing formulas, and their individuality is preserved under the Mohammedan domination. For him Coptic art is the only universal characteristic form. He can, however, be convicted out of his own mouth, for he sets out to prove that the Copts already possessed, before the Arab conquest, the essential elements of the style afterwards developed; as, for example, the pointed arch and the germs of polygonal decoration. These, he says, they imposed on

the Arabs. In what way, then, do the Copts stand in a unique position? They also, as well as the Moors and Persians, possessed their "pre-existing formula." That M. Gayet, being especially familiar with Mohammedan Egypt, should wish to write a handbook of its art, well and good, but let him call it by its right title, and not seek to enthrone it in a place that is not its due, under the general title of "Arab art." We still wait for a history and a handbook that shall attempt the difficult task of treating all the branches of Arab art.

In the second place, M. Gayet not only denies that Arab art was influenced by Byzantine art, but attributes to the Copts and Arabs a pronounced opposition and aversion to it. His own contemptuous prejudice against it is vented more than once. The Byzantine hemispherical dome, which to most people has seemed the architectural form that best represents the infinite, is for him oppressive, narrow and material, as compared to the soaring, mystic and spiritual character of the horizontal roof adopted by the Mohammedan Copts! For him the Byzantines were the continuators of ancient Greece, that inferior people of meagre and narrow ideas whose hateful artistic tyranny has been the means of imposing the human figure as the principal object and norm of art. Arab art alone was so idealistic, broad and internal as to discard man and take lines and polygons as its means of expression.

Being endowed with so great a hatred of Byzantine art, M. Gayet easily disposes of its generally received claim to an influence on the formation of Arab art. He cannot in certain cases overlook the fact that Byzantine artists were sent to the Khalifs from Constantinople. In the first instance which he cites of a Coptic artist employed in Arabia, namely the rebuilding of the Kaaba of Mecca shortly before Mohammed's Flight to Medina, he commits a curious piece of suppression. He notes the Copt who was captured with the vessel carrying architectural material, but he omits to mention that there were two artists, the other being a *Byzantine Greek*. In the case of the rebuilding of the mosque at Mecca under El-Walîd, the Greek Emperor sent, according to Es-Sanhûdi, eighty artists, of whom forty were Greeks and forty Copts: by a piece of specious but groundless reasoning M. Gayet concludes that the Copts were the only artists that really constructed the mosque. Besides, it seems as if the presence of any Copts should be regarded as doubtful, for all the artists came, apparently, from Constantinople, and if there were Copts among them they must have been of those who practised the Byzantine style. It is in harmony with his system that M. Gayet should omit the description of the early mosques and other Arab buildings which are examples of Byzantine influence or are known to have

been built by Byzantine artists—such as the mosque of Damascus and those of El-Aksa and of Omar at Jerusalem; and also that he should disregard the evident fact—proved by many Arabic texts—that the rich mosaic and marble decorations of the Arab mosques and palaces was due largely to Byzantine influence, and often to the hand of Byzantine artists.

Finally, the third question is in regard to the polygonal system of decoration, so often referred to. It is true that in Egypt this system reached an unsurpassed degree of perfection, elaboration and universal application. For M. Gayet, “the heart of a race beats” in it; it is “one of the strongest expressions of the human mind,” and may be considered as “the essential character of all Islamic art.” I shall not attempt here to do more than state: (1) that Byzantine art may dispute with Mohammedan the claim to a prior development of the polygonal system; (2) that hundreds of Byzantine and Italian monuments dating between the x and xiii centuries—which is the very period of the *earliest* Mohammedan examples—show a development of the polygonal system as splendid, as intricate and as scientific as the Egyptian. The mosaic decoration of the pulpits, choir-screens, paschal candlesticks, altar-tabernacles and sepulchral monuments of the Sicilian, Neapolitan and Roman schools cannot be surpassed in Egypt. This I can safely say, because of this branch of polygonal study I have made a specialty.

This being the case, we must admit that Greeks and Italians understood the theory and practice of the polygonal system, and M. Gayet's assertion that it represents the soul of a special race or the essence of a special art is untenable.

A few words of criticism remain. At the very beginning of his book M. Gayet makes the usual statement of the uninitiated—that the Arabs as a whole had always been nomads, and were never influenced by any other civilization. This is quite incorrect. Several dynasties of Arab kings are now known, from hundreds of inscriptions, and we can date back Arab civilization two thousand years B. C. Arabs conquered and settled Abyssinia. Even in the period immediately preceding Mohammed, when the nomadic element had become predominant, there was still the province of Yemen and there were still the Arab Kingdoms of the borders of Persia and Palestine. The pre-Islamic poems and legends show the strong influence of Persia, of the Jews and Syrians. For the period immediately following the conquest, M. Gayet minimises the role of other nations beside the Copts. No orientalist can be in any doubt that the Byzantino-Syrian and the Persian were the two influences that combined with Arab characteristics to form Mahommedan civilization, while it is necessary



to concede a preponderating influence to the Copts in the artistic field of Egypt, although even in Egypt an unprejudiced eye will attribute to the Byzantines a large share in the formation of the decorative style. At the same time we will grant that the Coptic artists, with an art partly original and partly Byzantine, exercised a strong influence at times outside of Egypt. I will even call M. Gayet's attention to an extremely important and early instance of Egyptian artistic influence in Palestine, which seems to have escaped his attention. The great Aksa mosque at Jerusalem was restored in A. H. 425-27 (A. D. 1032-5), by the architect Abdallah ibn el Hasan, of Cairo, by order of the Egyptian Fatimid Khalif Edh-Dhahar. The great inscription recording this fact was copied in the following century. See GUY LE STRANGE in *Pal. Expl.*, Oct. 1888, and in his *Palestine Under the Moslems*, p. 102.

With the exceptions above discussed, M. Gayet's book is a safe one to read, and is always interesting. We hope that many points which it was impossible for him to treat or prove in so limited a compass will receive ample treatment in some future book which should include Christian Coptic architecture and decoration, and should treat more fully of the origins of polygony, which here remain obscure.

A. L. FROTHINGHAM, JR.

GIUSEPPE MERZARIO. *I Maestri Comacini. Storia artistica di mille duecento anni (600-1800)*. 2 vols. 8vo. Milan, 1893. Pp. XXVII-696 and XXIII-626.

The artists that give its title to this book are supposed to have originally formed an artistic guild on an island in Lake Como, where they sought refuge, in about 600 A. D., from the Lombard invasion. This association grew in importance and apparently flourished through the greater part of the Middle Ages, its members, as was the wont of mediæval artists, often travelling to other provinces. They were mainly architects, sometimes sculptors, seldom painters.

But this book does not confine itself, as the ordinary reader might expect, to the history of this phase of the art of Northern Italy.

The author's enthusiasm for his subject, combined with his want of discrimination in matters of style, and his fondness for strained and impossible deductions drawn to suit his purpose, make him include in his book the greater part of Italian art and a considerable section of all European art, which he claims to be by the hand or under the influence of these "Maestri Comacini." Nothing escapes his robust appetite and power of assimilation.